

the neglect of the young, and isolation from the spirit of the day.

The one general question which has engaged the minds of so many, is, what is to be done with our preachers who have passed the prime of life and have reached that age which has placed them beyond the Dead Line in the ministry.

A very eminent preacher in answer to this question, once said, "that they should be taken out and shot."

Such a procedure as that would be indeed very cruel and inconsistent for Christian people to follow.

But how much less cruel and inconsistent is the attitude of some people and some congregations, sometimes, sustained to the old worn out preacher?

This harsh and cruel manner of getting rid of an old veteran in the gospel ministry, would be the expression of the mind of some ungrateful and miserable congregation, who would be wonderfully relieved to get rid of an old servant in the quickest and cheapest way possible. And perhaps in some cases, it would be the kindest thing done to the old preacher.

One of Longfellow's poems, entitled the Bell of Atri, beautifully illustrates the attitude of some churches to the aged preacher.

Not having space or time to give the poem in full, I will give it in a condensed form, as follows: In the town of Atri, in southern Italy, King John erected a large bell in the square and sent out the proclamation, that if wrong was done to any man he was to ring the bell and a proper delegated man would come and decide on the case.

As time sped on and because of the frequent ringing of the bell, the lower end of the rope wore out. The rope was repaired by attaching a vine with leaves and tendrils to it. There lived in Atri, at that time, a knight who loved his hounds, horses and sports. He finally sold his hounds, rented his vineyards and his grounds and kept only his favorite horse.

At length he said, what is the use or need  
To keep at my own cost this lazy steed,  
Eating his head off in my stable here,  
When rents are low and provender is dear.  
Let him go feed upon the public ways;  
I want him only for the holidays.  
So the old steed was turned into the heat  
Of the long, lonely, silent, shadeless street;  
And wandered in suburban lanes forlorn,  
Barked at by dogs, and torn by brier and thorn.

Let me say right here, that any church that will so treat a venerable old preacher, one who has given the vigor, vim, and prime of his life, to its service who has been an instrument in the hands of God in bringing many souls to the cleansing fountain, made many homes happy, has been a benediction to all around him; and now when he has grown old, and when he can no longer respond to the many claims made upon him, without any bank account to his credit, and possibly, not even a humble little home that he can call his own, now turn him out in the cold, like the old horse, he is only a dead expense to us, turn him out to eke out an exist-

ence among strangers, possibly, or in the alms house, or by browsing on the commons of humanity.

Such a church is hardly worthy of the name church. Such a church is not living up to a proper standard, nor to the golden rule; neither is it loving its neighbor as it loves itself.

As the old horse continued to graze, one afternoon the bell in the square was heard to ring all over the town. In quite a short time quite a crowd had gathered in the square to learn who was now wronged. And to their surprise it was not a human being pulling at the rope, but it was the old dejected steed tugging at the vine and tendrils.

He who came there to try the case, cried, this steed belongs to the knight of Atri and referring to the old horse he said:

He calls for justice being sore distressed  
And pleads his cause as loudly as the best.

The decision rendered in the case addressing the knight is as follows:

What fair renown, what honor, what repute  
Can come to you from starving this poor brute,  
He who serves well and speaks not, merits more  
Than they who clamour loudest at the door.

Therefore the law decrees that as this steed  
Served you in youth, henceforth you shall take  
heed

To comfort his old age and to provide  
Shelter in stall, and food and field beside.

The Knight withdrew abashed; the people all,  
Led home the steed in triumph to his stall.  
The king heard and approved and laughed in  
glee,

And cried aloud: Right well it pleaseth me.

In conclusion let me give an imaginary proceeding of a church, that has on hand an old worn out preacher, whose character is above reproach and just criticisms, whose life is hid with Christ in God; but because of age, attended with some physical infirmities, has crossed the Dead Line.

The proceeding of a church whose mind is expressed by the harsh saying, the old preacher should be taken out and shot.

Some of the members who are not as spiritual as they might be are assembled together and propose as follows.

We will call a meeting of all the members and we will vote his dismissal, ask him to resign. We will hint that his usefulness is gone, that he is behind the times, that he is given to repetition, that he preaches too long, that his sermons are dry, and that he puts his hearers to sleep.

All this we will bring up against our old pastor, and then we will turn him adrift, like an old blind or stage horse or a lame dog.

Never even after securing a younger man, favor the courtesy being extended to the old worn out preacher, to offer a public prayer, or to give a talk in a public meeting, or in the Sunday-school, etc., etc.

We have laid the old man on the shelf and favor having him to remain there.

Never stop to think, that he has grown gray in their thankless service.

Never stop to think, that he had given them lovingly away at the marriage altar to

their hearts chosen; never stop to think, that he wept with them when death's shadow darkened their door.

Never stop to think, that he had many times laid aside his pen and listened often with courteous grace to their conversations and pleas, when his moments were like gold dust to him.

Never stop to think, that he had patiently and uncomplainingly accepted at their hands the smallest pittance that would sustain life, simply because the Master said to him, "Tarry ye here till I come."

Never stop to think, that the wife of his youth, whom he won from a home of luxury and plenty, is broken down with privation and fatigue, and of their thousand unnecessary demands made upon her strength, patience and time.

Never stop to think, that his children at an early age were exiled from the parsonage roof, because there was not bread enough and to spare in the father's house.

Never stop to think, that his library consists only of a Bible, a dictionary and a concordance, simply because his salary was too meager to supply himself with books.

Never stop to think, that he has long been a stranger to a religious paper.

Never stop to think, that his wardrobe would be spurned by many a mechanic in our cities.

Never stop to think, that he has arisen early and sat up late at night to till the soil with weary limbs for earthly manna, while his intellect lay dormant.

Never stop to think of all that; but call a meeting, and vote him useless and turn him out. Lay him on the shelf, we have no further use for him.

Don't spare him the starting tear of sensibility, or the flush of a wounded spirit or hope.

No, no time for parleying or consideration, turn the old patriarch out, give him time to go to the moss-covered church-yard and there let him linger around the graves of loved ones, friends and brethren whom he laid away in active life and finally let him bid farewell to the unconscious dead and then settle down in retired life almost to be forgotten.

And then give the right hand of fellowship to some younger man and when he grows old tho his life has been well spent in the gospel ministry, but now he comes to that point where he crosses the Dead Line, then turn him out just as all the others have been.

#### THE VALUE OF RELIGION

IDA A. SIMMONDS

Every person should have a definite purpose in life.

The purpose of God in giving His Son to the world was to save it from sin.

Will we accept Him as our example and be submissive to divine appointments in all ways and at all times? As the clouds begin to cover the deep blue sky until sun, moon and stars are hidden from our view, at last the tempest is at hand, have we sought